

REMARKS

Status of Claims:

Claims 1-9 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 5, 6, 8 and 9 have been withdrawn from consideration; and claims 1-4 and 7 are currently pending and have been examined. Claim 1 has been amended, claim 3 has been canceled and claims 10 and 11 have been added.

Claim Objections:

Claim 3 is objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.75(c) as being improper dependent form for failing to further limit the subject matter of a previous claim. Applicant has canceled claim 3 from the application.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102 and 103:

Claims 1-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Matsumoto, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,092,434). Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ebina, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,089,117) in view of Matsumoto, et al. For the following reason, Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

Claim 1 has been amended so that it does not read on the cylindrical holding member of Matsumoto which surrounds the entire circumferential portion of the nut. Specifically, claim 1 recites that the holding member includes a cap portion which surrounds only a portion of a circumference of the circulating member and a flange on which a hole is provided. Thus, according to this language of claim 1, the holding member does not surround the entire circumferential of the nut, in contrast to that which is disclosed in Matsumoto.

In more detail, Matsumoto, in Fig. 8, discloses the metallic holding member 7 which surrounds the entire outer circumference of the nut. As a result, the holding member has enough strength relative to a situation in which a might ball fall out from the tube (ball falling out from tube situation).

However, there is a following problem. That is, when it is desirable to replace the balls with balls having a different diameter so that the device can be used under different conditions, it is necessary to remove the holding member from the nut in Matsumoto. Hence, a special tool is required and the removing operation is difficult.

On contrary, according to the claimed invention, the U-shaped tube circulating member, which is formed by resin injection molding, is held on the flat surface on the outer circumference of the nut by a metallic holding member via a screw.

Thus, by using the U-shaped tube, a circulating path, which is generally three-dimensional and complex shape such that scooping direction is coincident with the tangential direction of the helix of the threaded groove of the screw shaft, can be provided at a low cost. Simultaneously, by using the fixing structure in which the screw fixes the holding member on the fiat surface of the nut, a special tool is not required and removing operation is simplified, while maintaining sufficient strength and low noise.

Based on the foregoing, it is submitted that claim 1 and its dependent claims patentably distinguish over the prior art. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.114(c)
U.S. Application No.: 10/577,913

Attorney Docket No.: Q94726

which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

/Brian W. Hannon/

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
Telephone: (202) 293-7060
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

WASHINGTON DC SUGHRUE/265550

65565

CUSTOMER NUMBER

Brian W. Hannon
Registration No. 32,778

Date: December 5, 2008